

RECORD TYPE: FEDERAL (NOTES MAIL)

CREATOR:Samuel A. Thernstrom (CN=Samuel A. Thernstrom/OU=CEQ/O=EOP [CEQ])

CREATION DATE/TIME: 4-JUN-2002 16:05:56.00

SUBJECT:: AP on climate

TO:Scott McClellan (CN=Scott McClellan/OU=WHO/O=EOP@EOP [WHO])

READ:UNKNOWN

TEXT:

U.S. Outlines Climate Change Impact

Mon Jun 3, 4:44 PM ET

By JOHN HEILPRIN, Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) - The Bush administration warns in a report to the United Nations (news - web sites) of significant effects on the environment from climate change but suggests nothing to deal with heat-trapping "greenhouse" pollution beyond voluntary action by industry.

For the first time, the administration puts most of the blame for recent warming on human activity, pointing to the burning of fossil fuel that releases carbon dioxide and other heat-trapping gases into the atmosphere, according to the report released by the Environmental Protection Agency (news - web sites).

"The changes observed over the last several decades are likely mostly due to human activities, but we cannot rule out that some significant part

of these changes is also a reflection of natural variability," the report says.

"Human-induced warming and associated sea level rises are expected to continue through the 21st century," it says. "Secondary effects ... include

increases in rainfall rates and increased susceptibility of semiarid regions to drought."

The report also says that despite some lingering scientific uncertainties,

"There is general agreement that the observed warming is real and has been particularly strong within the past 20 years."

In the United States, changes over the next few decades are expected to put Southeastern coastal communities at greater risk of storm surges, prompt more uncomfortable heat waves in cities and reduce snowpack and water supplies in the West

The extents of aspen, eastern birch and sugar maple probably will contract dramatically in the United States, shift into Canada and cause loss of maple syrup production in northern New York and New England. Great Lakes water levels are expected to drop, which would affect navigation, water supplies and aquatic species. Production of U.S. hardwood and softwood products is projected to increase, mostly in the South. Fewer cold days and reduced snowpack do not bode well for the southernmost ski areas, where costs of snowmaking would rise.

Kalee Kreider, global warming (news - web sites) campaign director for the National Environmental Trust, an advocacy group, said environmentalists want from the administration a climate change plan that joins with other nations in requiring carbon dioxide emission reductions and increased fuel efficiency requirements for vehicles.

"It's good they've done a 180-degree turn on the science. Given the audience, they pretty much had to," Kreider said. "But we're still waiting for a plan that mandates pollution cuts."

The EPA paper, submitted to the United Nations, was posted without notice on the agency's Web site late Friday and reported Monday by The New York Times. EPA officials did not immediately return phone calls for comment Monday.

Last year, the White House described climate change as a serious issue after seeking opinions of the National Academy of Sciences (news - web sites) but was undecided about how much of the problem should be blamed on human activities. President Bush (news - web sites) favors a climate plan with voluntary measures to slow the rate of growth in gas emissions but allow them to continue to rise.

He opposes regulating as a pollutant carbon dioxide emissions from power plants, unlike legislation sought by Senate Environment Chairman James Jeffords (news - web sites), an independent from Vermont, and some Democrats.

European Union (news - web sites) countries formally signed the Kyoto Protocol (news - web sites) on Friday. It was negotiated in 1997 to stem pollution and global warming; President Bush has rejected it. The ratification by the 15 EU countries at the headquarters of the United Nations represented a major step toward putting the treaty into force.

On the Net: Climate Action Report 2002:
<http://www.epa.gov/globalwarming/publications/car>

U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change: <http://unfccc.int>